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From the Bookshelf

Probing the Probers By William H. Stringer

CIA: The Inside Story, by Andrew Tully.
New York: William Morrow & Co. 276 pp.
\$4.50.

When a newsman undertakes to probe into the Central Intelligence Agency's undertakings he may proceed easily to a point, discovering favorable and minor coups. Director Allen Dulles always permitted a certain degree of publicity.

But then the digging newsman encounters a stone ledge. The inner doors are closed, the deep secrets undecipherable. The CIA is protecting its operations.

How Washington newsman Andrew Tully managed to penetrate as far as he did with "CIA: The Inside Story," one doesn't know. Director Dulles referred to this book as the "upside-down" story, on "Meet the Press" a few weeks ago, and said it contained inaccuracies.

No doubt it does, and fosters myths as well. But it is a colorful story, and it may be the last for a while, for the new Director of the CIA, John A. McCone, thinks the agency should become more anonymous.

Mr. Tully makes some strong claims for the CIA—a role in promoting central government in the Congo, for instance, when most observers thought the United Nations deserved the honors.

No wonder some Frenchmen thought the CIA was promoting the revolt of the French generals in Algeria—but Mr. Tully lays this suspicion to the probability that secret operatives, in currying favor, "let their own politics show and by so doing led the Challe rebels to believe that the United States looked with favor on their adventure."

Surely the book overstates the CIA's achievements in some countries. But the agency did, as Mr. Tully says, bring off the revolt that ousted the pro-Communist Arbenz regime in Guatemala, assisted strongly in ousting Premier Mossadegh in Iran, and, most unwisely, helped the pro-Western Laotian general, General Phoumi Nosavan, who had no popular support, get rid of (temporarily) Prince Souvanna Phouma, the neutralist who (now reinstated) still offers the only prospect for Lao peace without United States troop involvement.

In telling the full story of the Cuba fiasco, where the CIA was involved in broad daylight, the author analyzes two of the CIA's major faults, which President Kennedy expects Mr. McCone to correct.

Number one was "CIA's apparently traditional unwillingness to do business with any but the forces of the far right." This leaning has not always prevailed, by any means, but it produced disaster in Cuba and near-disaster in Laos.

Fault number two was that Secretary of State Dulles "relied much more heavily on brother Allen's estimates than he did on reports from his ambassadors . . . and made of CIA a kind of super foreign service." This, too, was not always the case, but it is significant that after Secretary Dulles's passing, his successor, Christian A. Herter worked out an agreement with Allen Dulles which, on paper at least, put CIA personnel in each country under the control of the United States ambassador. This understanding has lately been reaffirmed between Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Mr. McCone.

This agreement should curtail the tendency of CIA to make policy on its own, free-wheeling beyond the ken of ambassadors who either were not told of cloak-and-dagger operations or preferred not to know because such things were "dirty business."

A friendly and deservedly applauding portrait of Director Dulles emerges. He was the master-spy from OSS days who in two world wars conducted vital secret negotiations with the enemy.

Mr. Tully tells of the time when information on Chinese intervention allegedly furnished by CIA in Korea was disregarded by General MacArthur, and the later time when advance warning of the Israeli-British-French attack on Suez was provided but ignored by the Eisenhower administration. He tells the story of the ill-fated U-2 flight.

Hereafter, quite evidently, Mr. McCone will see to it that the agency conducts no more big-scale operations that cannot be kept clandestine. Another Cuban affair would be handed to the Pentagon.

He will pay perhaps somewhat more attention to intelligence-gathering and somewhat less to cloak-and-dagger work.

Mr. Tully's book could have dealt less with adventures and more with the problem of how a top intelligence agency (which has skillfully avoided having a congressional watch-dog committee attached to it) should be handled. But if the story mainly scratches the surface, it is nevertheless highly readable.

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